

St. John's College plans to turn newly acquired Hall of Records into library Campus building bought from state; [ARUNDEL SUN Edition]

JoAnna Daemmrich. **The Sun**. Baltimore, Md.: Mar 11, 1993. pg. 8.C

Abstract (Summary)

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For St. John's, a tiny, liberal arts institution that bases its entire curriculum on 130 great books of Western civilization, the library is the soul of the campus. The library is a "place of study and quiet reflection," not a media center, Mr. [Jeffrey Bishop] said.

The college's old library is outdated and has only 10,500 square feet of usable space. The student body has doubled since 1900, from 250 to 400 undergraduates and 80 graduate students, Mr. Bishop said. Applications for the college's \$20,000-a-year program have risen 50 percent in the last decade.

Full Text (468 words)

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College students will soon pore over Plato's "Republic" in Maryland's old Hall of Records, a three-story Annapolis landmark built to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the state's founding.

St. John's College bought the building from the state for \$700,000 yesterday to replace its cramped library in Woodward Hall.

Built in 1934 on land sold to the state by St. John's, the worn red-brick building on the 36-acre college campus in downtown Annapolis was the first in the nation designed as a repository for a state's archives.

It has housed state offices since a new Hall of Records opened on Rowe Boulevard in 1986. The college has agreed to pay \$150,000 to move the offices.

"The building is right on campus, so we think it's a perfect use," said Jeffrey Bishop, vice president of college advancement.

Administrators plan to renovate and expand the Georgian-style building to house the college's collection of more than 100,000 books and other materials. The Hall of Records has more than double the space of the current library in Woodward Hall, which dates to 1900.

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The Hall of Records, on College Avenue near St. John's Street, was built on land sold to the state in 1934 for \$10.

Laurence Hall Fowler, a noted Baltimore architect, designed it to fit in with the 17th-century architecture of the college. It has 25,000 square feet of space and a meticulously designed interior with symbols of Maryland carved in raised wood panels.

The college plans to begin renovations in spring 1994 and hopes to complete them by 1996, when St. John's will celebrate its 300th anniversary. The project -- including renovation of Woodward Hall for a graduate center and administrative offices -- will cost about \$6 million.

Plans call for removing seven-story shelves in the middle of the building, installing air conditioning and creating a mezzanine on the second floor and a sweeping check-out counter.

The Maryland Historic Trust has given the plans preliminary approval, but they also must undergo scrutiny by Annapolis' Historic District Commission.

Local preservationists have voiced concerns about some of the modifications, especially altering the roofline of the hall, although they have lauded the college's past efforts to restore old buildings.

A meeting with the historic commission is set for April 13.

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